

To the Honorable Commissioners of the FCC,

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules.

The ownership rules must not only NOT be relaxed, they must be strengthened. To do anything but tighten the rules would be a disservice to millions of people. To loosen the rules would be to allow one more group of rich and powerful people to run roughshod over the needs of the public. The radio waves do NOT exist for the media companies. They exist for the public. You hold the media as a trust for the people of the United States, not the media conglomerates.

I am unable to speak of this issue dispassionately. The Telecommunications act of 1996 generally and this part of the act specifically have cost my city and my community dearly in quality of life.

Before the act passed, there was a classical music station in Detroit, WQRS. I was a part of that station. WQRS had been performing as service not only in providing a kind of music now unavailable on Detroit airwaves, but also serving as a community bulletin board for the arts and a place for musicians and people of all social and economic strata to learn and grow. We supported the arts by broadcasting important arts events as well as providing music scholarships. We supported many non-artistic charities as well. We fulfilled that service successfully and profitably for over 35 years. Our final year as a classical station we made a 2 million dollar profit. We were given certificates of congratulation from the Detroit City Council, the governor and the United States Senate. We had many listeners, and our ratings compared favorably with most of the stations in the market that had other formats. We were an important part of the community, and were aware of our obligation to serve that community.

Immediately upon the passage of the act, we became aware that this was not to be for long. The station was sold 5 times in eighteen months, each time for a larger price. The last company to buy the station changed the format. That format was a failure, as were the two formats to which the station was changed after that. There was never a question that the station was now NOT a service. It was not going to be serving the community. It was merely a commodity. Anytime it was suggested that there was an obligation on the part of a radio station to serve the community, the person suggesting it was looked at as if he was at best naive, at worst stupid.

The reason for the great harm that was caused was that large media conglomerates were now able to own as many stations as they wanted. They wanted to own as many as possible because it wasn't about radio anymore. It was about domination. It was a testosterone rush. They wanted to do it for the same reason a dog licks himself: Because it can. The public be damned.

Immediately after the change in format, newspaper articles in Detroit decried the change, petitions were made and filled up, tens of thousands of signatures were collected.

Thousands of bumper stickers were seen that said "Detroit needs classical Radio." Letters were written to the company. ALL were completely ignored.

The new formats were losing money; the classical format had made money. The new format was a failure; the classical format had been a success. MANY gentle souls were being ignored. ALL of those facts meant nothing. The conglomerate would have its way.

One interesting quote: A representative of the company was quoted as saying that the change in format would actually increase listener choices. A statement like that is disingenuous on the face of it. Only a person who didn't think about that statement at ALL would not realize it as a lie.

In short, here is a specific instance, undoubtedly only one of many, that shows that left to its own devices big business will hurt whoever they want to without ever considering the harm they are doing. If Enron, Worldcom and others doesn't prove it, nothing will, but radio conglomerates are carrying on the tradition in fine style.

I know that many of the comments you have received have been couched in legal verbiage, prepared by attorneys and presented by lobbyists. I beg you to remember the very few actual people those opinions represent.

I urge you, as a member of a community directly harmed by the relaxing of ownership rules to remember your duty as a protector of the public trust. Retain and increase the rules regarding media ownership.

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